



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

**Abermorddu C.P. School
Cymau Road
Abermorddu
Flintshire
LL12 9DH**

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by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

This report is also available in Welsh.

About Abermorddu C.P. School

Abermorddu Community Primary School is in the village of Abermorddu, near Caergwrle, in Flintshire local authority. There are 215 pupils between the ages of three and eleven, organised into seven single-age classes and a part-time nursery class.

The three-year average for pupils eligible for free school meals is around 9%. This is much lower than the national percentage of 18%. A very few pupils speak English as an additional language or come from an ethnic minority background. No pupils speak Welsh at home. The school identifies around 4% of its pupils as having special educational needs, which is well below the national percentage of 21%.

The school was last inspected by Estyn in May 2013. The headteacher took up his post in September 2006.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website at the link below.
<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk/Schools/SchoolSearch?lang=en>

Summary

The headteacher, teachers and support staff care for the pupils well. They focus clearly on developing pupils' wellbeing diligently and conscientiously. Most pupils enjoy attending the school and they have positive working relationships with the staff and each other. As a result, nearly all pupils' behaviour in classes and around the school is good.

Teaching does not challenge pupils effectively to produce their best work consistently. As a result, many pupils' writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills do not develop strongly enough. The planning of the curriculum is weak and does not support the effective progression of pupils' skills. Many activities are too adult led and this limits opportunities for pupils to develop their wider skills and to become proficient independent learners.

The relatively new leadership team has faced significant challenges in recent times, especially in relation to the staff's working relationships. This has contributed to a lack of accountability among staff for the standards pupils achieve and the quality of education provided in their classes. The monitoring of teaching by leaders and managers is not rigorous or robust enough and there is a lack of clarity over roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. Currently, leaders do not demonstrate the capacity to bring about the necessary improvements.

Inspection area	Judgement
Standards	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	Adequate and needs improvement
Teaching and learning experiences	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement
Care, support and guidance	Adequate and needs improvement
Leadership and management	Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Recommendations

- R1 Improve leadership at all levels and promote effective collaboration among all staff
- R2 Improve the effectiveness of teaching across the school to challenge all pupils to perform consistently at their best
- R3 Ensure that teachers plan effectively and progressively to develop and raise standards in pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in subject specific lessons and across the curriculum
- R4 Improve pupils' extended writing skills
- R5 Improve pupils' standards in mathematics
- R6 Improve pupils' independent learning skills

What happens next

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that special measures are required in relation to this school. The school will draw up an action plan to show how it is going to address the recommendations. Estyn will monitor the school's progress on a termly basis.

Main findings

Standards: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

As they move through school, many pupils do not make strong enough progress when writing in extended forms and when developing their numeracy and ICT skills. Many pupils, including the more able, do not achieve as well as they could. Many pupils with special educational needs make suitable progress towards their individual targets.

In the foundation phase, most pupils develop suitable speaking and listening skills. They talk about their work clearly and retell familiar stories well, such as the story of Little Red Riding Hood. However, a minority of pupils do not listen carefully enough to adult instructions and to each other's opinions. As a result, they do not always understand what they need to do to complete their tasks effectively. This has a negative impact on their progress and overall achievement. Many pupils in key stage 2 speak articulately and make their meaning clear. They listen attentively in lessons. When in discussion groups, they share ideas respectfully, listening to others' opinions well.

Many pupils in the foundation phase make slow progress in learning letters and sounds. As a result, they make inconsistent progress in reading. They recognise common words by sight and use picture cues well to aid their understanding. However, they struggle to read unfamiliar words accurately due to their insecure knowledge of phonics.

In key stage 2, most pupils make suitable progress in developing their reading skills. Older pupils in key stage 2 read aloud confidently, fluently and with lively expression. They enjoy fiction and factual books and practise their higher-order reading skills to find information from different sources effectively. For example, they research conscientiously on the internet to find out about the experiences of an evacuee during the Second World War and to research about Japan.

By the end of the foundation phase, a majority of pupils write legibly for a range of purposes. For example, they recount events during the Great Fire of London, create shopping lists and write instructions to make a sandwich. However, they rarely write at length. Their sentences frequently lack basic punctuation and they do not make effective use of their knowledge of phonics which restricts their progress in spelling. Overall, their writing skills do not develop effectively in line with their abilities.

In key stage 2, a majority of pupils write for a wide range of purposes. For example, they create biographies of famous people and use persuasive writing to encourage visitors to climb Mount Snowdon. However, across the school, most pupils' standards of writing are inconsistent and fluctuate too much between classes. A minority of pupils' extended writing skills are weak, and they are too dependent on adults to complete tasks. Many pupils' written work is unsatisfactory compared to their abilities and pupils make too little progress when completing writing tasks.

Around half the pupils in the foundation phase make good progress in acquiring basic skills in mathematics. Most perform simple calculations accurately and measure

each other's arms and legs carefully. However, many pupils' ability to apply their mathematical skills to solve problems and to choose which operations they need to complete tasks is limited.

Many pupils in key stage 2 develop adequate skills in most aspects of mathematics. However, they apply their skills infrequently to solve problems independently in challenging tasks. Many pupils' application of their mathematical skills in the wider curriculum is weak and their progress is unsatisfactory. This is due to limited use of their numeracy skills and the poor quality of their work in relation to their abilities. Additionally, many pupils demonstrate a lack of depth in their understanding of how to use mathematics in everyday situations.

Most pupils in the foundation phase use electronic tablets confidently to record their activities and to practise number games and phonics exercises. Many pupils in key stage 2 use a range of software competently to create interesting presentations, for example about life as a servant in Tudor times. However, pupils of all ages use their ICT regularly for a narrow range of purposes. For example, they do not use it effectively to handle data and to create and interrogate databases and spreadsheets purposefully. As a result, their use of ICT across the curriculum and their limited understanding of how to use ICT skills in different contexts to improve their knowledge and understanding are unsatisfactory.

Many pupils make appropriate progress in developing their Welsh oracy skills. By Year 2, many use suitable phrases in everyday situations. In key stage 2, many pupils answer with satisfactory responses when prompted by teachers. However, many pupils lack confidence during discussions. Their reading and writing in Welsh is adequate.

Wellbeing and attitudes to learning: Adequate and needs improvement

Most pupils speak confidently and with pride about their school. They state that they feel safe and secure at school, and that staff care for them well. Most pupils feel that teachers and support staff listen to them sensitively and demonstrate a strong degree of support and respect for their needs.

Most pupils behave very well in class and around the school. They are polite and friendly, and treat other pupils and adults with respect. They understand the school's rules and abide by them consistently. These include responsibilities to lock the school gates and to perform duties around the school at playtimes. Nearly all pupils co-operate effectively in lessons when working in pairs and groups. They move around the school thoughtfully, including when attending assemblies.

Most pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and drinking well. For example, foundation phase pupils talk confidently about nourishing food types when planning a party for a mythical creature, which links well to their topic work. In key stage 2, most pupils demonstrate a sound knowledge of foods that are good for you and discuss intelligently the importance of eating fruit and vegetables regularly. However, many pupils do not choose to eat healthily at playtimes.

Nearly all pupils understand the importance of physical activity in looking after their bodies, especially their hearts. They embrace opportunities to participate in physical

activities and to play games at lunchtimes and in beneficial after-school clubs, which promote their health and wellbeing well. For example, pupils enjoy netball, rugby and the school's fitness club, which many attend regularly. Most pupils know how to keep safe online. They understand well that they must not share passwords or personal information with others.

A few pupils have additional leadership roles, which they enjoy, for example as part of the school council and eco committee. A few pupils in upper key stage 2 use their entrepreneurial skills well by running a range of different businesses. For example, pupils make their own jams and chutneys to sell at a local market and work out their margins in order to make a profit.

On a very few occasions, pupils work well independently. For example, a majority of younger key stage 2 pupils select suitable mathematical strategies to solve problems independently. However, most pupils do not choose to work independently readily enough. Across the school, too many pupils wait passively for a friend or an adult to help them when they find their work difficult. This highlights their lack of perseverance and resilience when attempting to complete challenging tasks.

Recently, pupils contribute well to the selection of the topics that they want to learn in lessons. However, this is at an early stage of development and pupils do not demonstrate the ability to influence effectively what they learn on a daily basis. Across the school, pupils do not have enough of a say in what and how they learn, and they depend too much on adult direction. This limits their ability to show independence, initiative and creativity too much.

Many pupils understand the importance of regular attendance and the school's initiatives on how to improve attendance. However, despite the school's efforts, pupils' attendance rates have fallen over the last two years and do not compare well to those of other similar schools. Most pupils are punctual at the beginning of the school day.

Teaching and learning experiences: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

Overall, the quality of teaching has many significant weaknesses. Many teachers' expectations of the standards that pupils can achieve are too low and the tasks they set for pupils do not challenge them well enough. The teaching does not support pupils to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills effectively. For example, too much adult direction across the school and the overuse of prescriptive worksheets limit pupils' independent learning skills. As a result, learning tasks do not meet the needs and abilities of all pupils well enough.

Nearly all staff establish positive working relationships with pupils, and these have a beneficial effect on their wellbeing. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour effectively and treat all pupils equally and with appropriate respect. In a very few classes, the teaching fosters positive attitudes among pupils, through successful reviews of their previous learning and skilful questioning. However, in too many lessons, the way in which teachers group pupils does not help them to meet pupils' individual needs purposefully, particularly those who are more able.

In a few classes, teachers share effective learning objectives with pupils and emphasise the importance of identifying how to succeed at tasks. These teachers adapt activities well to match the needs of differing abilities. However, this practice is inconsistent across the school and, as a result, too much of the teaching does not help pupils to make good progress. In many classes, the pace of learning is too slow and overlong introductions by teachers have a negative impact on pupils' progress and their attitudes to learning.

The school does not plan the curriculum strategically enough. Schemes of work do not link together effectively. They do not create a cohesive and progressive approach to the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the school. Teachers plan too many isolated tasks that do not connect to other tasks or build well on pupils' previous learning. As a result, too often, teachers' planning does not ensure that lessons build systematically on pupils' previous achievements. This limits the depth of pupils' learning and understanding.

The school's provision for developing pupils' literacy skills is broadly appropriate. However, it does not support pupils well enough to develop a depth of understanding of different forms of writing. For example, in key stage 2, teachers provide limited and unstructured opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length across the curriculum. There are insufficient purposeful opportunities provided for pupils to apply their numeracy skills systematically across the curriculum. Additionally, many teachers do not plan well enough to develop pupils' ICT skills effectively.

In the foundation phase, pupils have access to the outdoors and to enhanced and continuous provision, both within their classrooms and in joint working areas. However, staff do not demonstrate a strong enough understanding of how to teach effectively according to the principles of the foundation phase. They do not monitor the learning environment successfully to encourage pupils to remain on task when working independently. As a result, many pupils do not learn productively during continuous and enhanced activities. This means that planned opportunities do not help pupils to make informed choices or to develop their creative, problem-solving and thinking skills successfully.

In key stage 2, teachers succeed in making their classes stimulating and engaging places. Colourful and attractive displays support teaching and learning suitably.

Teachers provide pupils with constructive feedback to allow them to understand how to improve their work, particularly orally. However, they do not use the information from assessments to plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively. Teachers do not hold pupils to account well enough in subsequent tasks. As a result, they do not challenge pupils rigorously to ensure that they take responsibility for improving their own work and to achieve as well as they can.

The school teaches pupils successfully about the advantages of learning Welsh and becoming bilingual. The school plans interesting learning activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Wales, which includes researching interesting details about Wales' capital city.

Care, support and guidance: Adequate and needs improvement

The school provides a warm, welcoming environment for pupils and it gives pupils' wellbeing a high priority. All staff provide pupils with effective care and support, which contributes well to ensuring that they are happy and content in school.

Leaders monitor and track the progress of all individuals and groups of pupils systematically using a wide range of assessments. They use the outcomes of monitoring effectively to identify a few pupils who need specific extra support. Leaders share the outcomes of monitoring with teaching staff to highlight other pupils who are making progress above or below expectations. However, leaders and teachers do not use the information rigorously enough to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should. This lack of robustness limits the quality of the school's provision and pupils' standards.

Teachers work closely with a wide range of specialist agencies, including behaviour support, counselling services and social services. They use training and guidance from these services well, particularly in supporting pupils with emotional, health and social needs. This enables identified pupils to engage positively with the school and to benefit from the opportunities that it offers.

Staff identify pupils with special educational needs at an early stage. They set clear targets for pupils in their individual plans and monitor their progress regularly. Staff ensure that they seek external support for these pupils when needed. They involve pupils in discussing and reviewing how well they are doing and keep parents fully informed.

The school provides an extensive range of withdrawal support in small groups for pupils identified as needing help in developing their basic skills. However, the group work is not fully effective in moving pupils forward. The lack of cohesion between the support sessions and pupils' work in the classroom fails to ensure that pupils benefit fully from the extra support. As a result, these pupils do not progress well enough in line with their abilities.

Leaders ensure that they keep parents well informed through half-termly newsletters and the school app. They arrange valuable information sessions and events for parents, such as the 'reading café' where pupils and parents can work together to ensure that parents support pupils' reading at home.

The school has effective arrangements for promoting healthy eating and drinking. There is a good range of after-school clubs which offer sporting and musical activities. These help to develop pupils' physical and creative skills well. Art displays around the school successfully promote pupils' wellbeing.

There are suitable opportunities for pupils to play an active part in decision making and to develop their leadership skills. Pupils take part, for example, in the mindfulness group and as sports ambassadors and digital leaders. The eco group have recently worked well with a conservation organisation to plan further developments to the school grounds. Upper key stage 2 pupils develop their business skills purposefully through taking responsibility for the 'AbermorVeg' and 'AbermorJam' projects.

Pupils have worthwhile experiences to develop their understanding of spiritual, moral, and social values during assemblies and classroom activities, which encourage them to respect other beliefs and religions. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness through, for example, the annual visit to France by Year 6 pupils, and through regular visits to the theatre. Pupils have a good range of opportunities to perform at school and in the local community, particularly as members of the school choir. The school links effectively with community organisations to enhance the learning experiences for pupils. The digital leaders have recently supported adults in a residential home to develop their use of ICT.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and give no cause for concern.

Leadership and management: Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement

The headteacher places great emphasis on ensuring that pupils feel happy and that they focus positively on enjoying their time at school. However, the lack of effective working relationships among key staff in recent years impacts negatively on the effectiveness of the school's work. These challenges have limited the headteacher's role in monitoring the school's work and holding staff to account for the quality of education and standards achieved by pupils in classes. For example, the current barriers to collaborative working limit the sharing of good practice among the teachers and inhibit opportunities for staff to address significant weaknesses in teaching across the school.

Apart from the headteacher, the school's senior leaders are relatively new to their posts. They have not had the opportunity to work together cohesively as a complete team in recent times and this has limited their impact on school improvement. As a result, the headteacher and staff do not have a shared vision for school improvement and professional expectations are too low. There is significant uncertainty over roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability among staff. Overall, the staff are not working unitedly as a team to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they could and that the quality of teaching is high in all classes.

Governors have appropriate knowledge of the school's performance and the impact of its provision on pupils' outcomes. They support the school well by conducting learning walks, scrutinising pupils' books and holding meetings with the school's leaders. They contribute willingly to identifying the school's targets for improvement and ensure that they allocate funds satisfactorily to address the needs of the school. This includes additional teachers and teaching assistants that provide suitable support across the school. However, their practices are not rigorous enough for them to act as critical friends and to hold the school to account for its performance.

The headteacher works with a limited range of staff to undertake self-evaluation activities in order to make judgements about the quality of the school's work. However, not all staff engage with these activities and, overall, the school's monitoring and self-evaluation processes are too weak. As a result, leaders do not have an accurate picture of the school's strengths or its most important areas for improvement.

In a few instances, school improvement work is beneficial. For example, leaders recognised the need to improve the security of the school site and the provision in the outdoor learning areas. They implemented effective actions to address these issues. However, overall school improvement actions, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, do not secure the full involvement and co-operation of a wide enough range of staff. As a result, too many staff are disengaged from school improvement processes and this reduces the impact and effectiveness of planned initiatives.

The headteacher provides a suitable range of external, professional learning opportunities for staff. Additionally, the school arranges staff training sessions at the school that impact appropriately on the quality of teaching and learning in a few areas. For example, the deputy headteacher led staff training on the use of electronic tracking systems to record pupils' progress effectively. However, in general, professional learning lacks a strategic approach and does not focus sharply enough on the key areas where the school requires improvement, such as the quality of teaching. Arrangements to identify training needs are unclear and there is insufficient evaluation of the impact that professional learning has on outcomes for pupils. Additionally, arrangements to share aspects of any good practice that exists are limited.

The headteacher works with governors professionally to manage the school's resources. The school uses grant funding to support vulnerable pupils well. The school has enough equipment and resources to support learning effectively in most areas of the curriculum. This allows teachers to make the best use of most internal and external areas and to provide an attractive learning environment for pupils.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

Estyn evaluates a provider's effectiveness using a four-point judgement scale:

Excellent	Very strong, sustained performance and practice
Good	Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement
Adequate and needs improvement	Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement
Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement	Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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